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SCHOOL CRIME: IDEOLOGIES AND INCIDENT REPORTING

Thomas Joseph Plutt
B.S., Kent State University, 1979

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

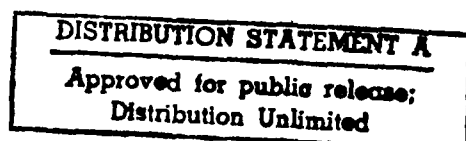
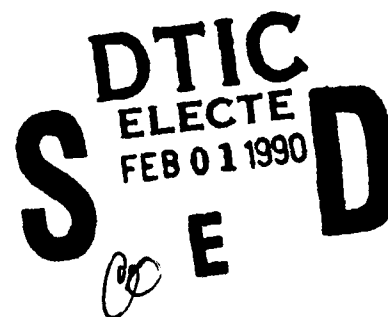
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Division of Criminal Justice

SCHOOL CRIME: IDEOLOGIES AND INCIDENT REPORTING

A Thesis

by

Thomas Joseph Plutt

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Abstract
of
SCHOOL CRIME: IDEOLOGIES AND INCIDENT REPORTING
by
Thomas Joseph Plutt

Statement of Problem

Since the mid 1960's the problem of school crime has had varying degrees of impact on our nation's public school system. Ideologies with respect to source of the school crime problem are controversial. Some propose that the source of the problem is located within the school itself, others suggest that the source is the community, while others contend that a combination of these two ideologies provide a more accurate explanation. In addition to this controversy in ideology, there exists the problems associated with the reporting of inaccurate and inadequate incidents of school crime to a central data collection point. (S. 117)

Sources of Data

Various sources were used to include books, journal articles, published and unpublished papers, as well as national, state and local reports. Source documents were obtained primarily from the California State University Library and Criminal Justice Division personnel.

Conclusions Reached

There is an ideological controversy that exists with respect to the source of the primary problems of school crime. The school-induced ideology contends that the source of the problem stems from the organizational characteristics of the school. The community-induced ideology contends that the source of the problem develops within the community and that the school merely becomes the setting for crime and disruption. The accommodationist ideology suggests that the school and the community share responsibility in causing the problems associated with school crime. To overcome this controversy would be quite difficult since there is widespread support for all three ideologies. The conclusion reached is that the more successful prevention programs are those that target the correction of both school and community factors, thus the accommodationist ideology appears to warrant more support.

It has also been determined that there is a tendency by the schools to inaccurately or inadequately report incidents of school crime either through willful failure or as a result of a lack of procedural guidelines. As a result, the extent of the problem cannot adequately be identified resulting in the possible or probable application of inappropriate program alternatives, or worse yet, no effort to correct a problem at all. At minimum, there exists an unreliable picture of the national extent of the school crime problem. What is recommended to correct this problem

is that a National School Crime Information Center be established to collect standardized incident data, process this data, and develop corrective program alternatives to correct specific problems. This center would act as a national clearinghouse for school crime related activity.

Committee Chair's Signature of Approval

Mark Phillips

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to those men and women who are working within the public school system in an effort to improve the learning environment of our children and the quality of education provided them. And, to all those scholars who study the causes of school crime so that problem identification and the search for solutions may be realized.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the United States Air Force, Office of Security Police for giving me the opportunity to further my education through the Air Force Institute of Technology, Civilian Institution Program. I wish to express gratitude to Professors Thomas A. Johnson, Thomas R. Phelps and Troy L. Armstrong for their help and patience in assisting me with this thesis. I would like to extend my thanks to my fellow security police officers for their never ending support and help through this most demanding year. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my wife and son's constant support through yet another demanding assignment.

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CHAPTER 1
SCHOOL CRIME
Introduction
Statement of the Problem

Historically, crime in our nation's schools has been a problem. Greenberg has suggested, "Violence and resultant educational chaos have been recurrent themes in schools for centuries."¹ Others view the problem of school crime as a recent phenomena, identifying the years prior to 1960 as a "preescalation period," where such acts occurred but were identified as sporadic, isolated and very minor in severity.² Whatever its origin, the problem of school crime has been identified as a continuing problem confronting the public school system, an issue requiring additional exploration in the area of causation and control.

A number of propositions exist when looking at the etiology and amelioration of school crime. One cannot enter into a task as complex as examining the problems and resolutions of school crime without focusing on the causes of crime in the community. Many have suggested that the problem of school crime and crime in our society are interrelated.

With the implementation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports in 1933, we as a nation started to systematically track criminal acts. Uniform Crime Report data identifying trends in criminal behavior from 1960 through 1975 indicate that criminal acts dramatically increased from 1960 through 1975 and then maintained a fairly constant level from 1976 through 1987 showing minor increases, (Table 1.1 and Table 1.2). When looking at data from the same time period as it pertains to school crime, the data reflects a similar pattern.³ What this data suggests is that crime in general and school crime in particular, has escalated, and stabilized reaching today's level of concern. It will be noted that the same Uniform Crime Report data reflects an increase and then a stabilization in all reportable index crimes except forcible rape and aggravated assault, crimes involving intense violence, (Table 1.1 and 1.2). It can be suggested then that this same level of criminal intensity not only exists in our communities as a whole, but in our school system as well.⁴ With this said, it is evident that the level of school crime as well as crime within the school attendance boundaries are similar.

The experts are divided, however, on how to address this problem; are the schools merely the location where community crime is committed or do the schools' characteristics act as causal factors of juvenile delinquency? There is much support for both of these ideologies and

this support will be addressed in depth in Chapter Two. In addition, the experts have identified the methods and the philosophy behind the collection of data, reflecting the incident levels of school crime, as a past and as a continuing problem. They suggest that inaccurate and inadequate data reporting, collection and analysis result in inadequate and inaccurate solution selection. Finally, they conclude that unless our school systems establish well-defined incident collection practices and begin to accurately report the number of criminal acts being committed at the classroom level free from any retribution and free from being labeled as a problem school, we will continue to meet with less than success in solving the school crime issue. It has been found that once the problem has been realistically identified and proper solutions applied, success with reducing the level of school crime has been realized, even in neighborhoods where crime outside of the school is constant.

Need For The Study

It is imperative that in order to effectively address the multi-faceted causes related to school crime that there exists a need by all, to include practitioners and scholars alike, to attempt to better understand what has been identified as the major sources of the school crime problem. In addition, once a better understanding of the problem is achieved, a multidisciplinary perspective needs to be established as to solutions to the problem. A frag-

mented approach to the problem is unsatisfactory. A unified approach is the only option to achieve success. It is by analyzing what literature exists and reaching a mutual level of cooperation as to what the problems are that this unified approach can be achieved.

Scope and Limitations of Study

This researcher has limited the scope of the study to addressing first, those ideologies that have identified what are believed to be the primary causes of the school crime problem. Second, the issue of the inaccurate and inadequate reporting of incidents of school crime will be addressed. Finally, it is imperative to recognize that this study is limited in that one cannot conceivably cover all of the issues that deal with the school crime problem in the limited space of this thesis. The problem is far too complex.

Organization of Remainder of Study

Chapter Two of this thesis will provide a summary of the literature dealing with school crime identifying the trends found in writings of the various disciplines involved in the study of this topic. The major schools of thought identified with the causes of school crime will also be presented along with a series of conclusions. In addition, the issue of school crime data reporting will be addressed in Chapter Two along with several conclusions as to the far-reaching problems that exist within this area. Chapter Three will offer recommendations that might

serve as considerations or solutions to the problems identified during the review of the literature. Finally, Chapter Three will present those conclusions reached along with a summary.

Definition of Terms

School Crime - is used to describe any act of violence, vandalism or disruptive behavior that is committed on school property or off school property at school sponsored activities.

Criminal Act - an act specifically prohibited by federal, state, and local law and includes but is not limited to: aggravated assault, assault, robbery, murder, manslaughter, arson, burglary, theft and larceny.

School Vandalism - is the willful or malicious destruction or defacement of school property.

Disruptive Behavior - would be covered by school directive and local laws dealing with problems to include: drug and alcohol abuse, truancy, tardiness, absenteeism, misconduct, disrespectful behavior, and any other act that disrupts the education process.

Table 1.1

Uniform Crime Reports, Total Number of Crimes 1960-1987

Year	# of Offenses	Total Crime Index	Property Crime Totals	Violent Crime by Type				Violent Crime Totals
				Murder/ Non-neg. Man- slaughter	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	
1960	179,323,175	3,384,200	3,095,700	9,110	17,190	107,840	154,320	288,460
1961	182,992,000	3,488,000	3,198,600	8,740	17,220	106,670	156,760	289,390
1962	185,771,000	3,752,200	3,450,700	8,530	17,550	110,860	164,570	301,510
1963	188,483,000	4,109,500	3,792,500	8,640	17,650	116,470	174,210	316,970
1964	191,141,000	4,564,600	4,200,400	9,360	21,420	130,390	203,050	364,220
1965	193,526,000	4,739,400	4,352,000	9,960	23,410	138,690	215,330	387,390
1966	195,576,000	5,223,500	4,793,300	11,040	25,820	157,990	235,330	430,180
1967	197,457,000	5,903,400	5,403,500	12,240	27,620	202,910	257,160	499,930
1968	199,399,000	6,720,200	6,125,200	13,800	31,670	262,840	286,700	595,010
1969	201,385,000	7,410,900	6,749,000	14,760	37,170	298,850	311,090	661,870
1970	203,235,298	8,098,000	7,349,200	16,000	37,990	349,860	334,970	738,820
1971	206,212,000	8,588,200	7,771,700	17,780	42,260	387,700	368,760	816,500
1972	208,230,000	8,248,800	7,413,900	18,670	46,850	376,290	393,090	834,900

Table 1.1 (continued)

Year	# of Offenses	Total Crime Index	Property Crime Totals	Violent Crime by Type				Violent Crime Totals
				Murder/Non-neg. Man-slaughter	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	
1973	209,851,000	8,718,100	7,842,200	19,640	51,400	384,220	420,650	875,910
1974	211,392,000	10,253,400	9,278,700	20,710	55,400	442,400	456,210	974,720
1975	213,124,000	11,256,600	10,230,300	20,510	56,090	464,970	484,710	1,026,280
1976	214,659,000	11,304,800	10,318,200	18,780	56,730	420,210	490,850	986,580
1977	216,332,000	10,935,800	9,926,300	19,120	63,020	404,850	522,510	1,009,500
1978	218,059,000	11,209,000	10,123,400	19,560	67,610	426,930	571,460	1,085,550
1979	220,099,000	12,249,500	11,041,500	21,460	76,390	480,700	629,480	1,208,030
1980	225,349,264	13,408,300	12,063,700	23,040	82,990	565,840	672,650	1,344,520
1981	229,146,000	13,423,800	12,061,900	22,520	82,500	592,910	663,900	1,361,820
1982	231,534,000	12,974,400	11,652,000	21,010	78,770	553,130	669,480	1,322,390
1983	233,981,000	12,108,600	10,850,500	19,310	78,920	506,570	653,290	1,258,090
1984	236,158,000	11,881,800	10,608,500	18,690	84,230	485,010	685,350	1,273,280
1985	238,740,000	12,431,400	11,102,600	18,990	88,670	497,870	723,250	1,328,800

Table 1.1 (continued)

Year	# of Offenses	Total Crime Index	Property Crime Totals	Violent Crime by Type				Violent Crime Totals
				Murder/ Non-neg. Man- slaughter	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	
1986	241,077,000	13,211,900	11,722,700	20,610	91,460	542,780	834,320	1,489,170
1987	243,400,000	13,508,700	12,024,700	20,100	91,110	517,700	855,090	1,484,000

Table 1.2

Uniform Crime Reports, Rate Per 100,000 1960-1987

Year	Total Crime Index	Property Crime Totals	Violent Crime by Type					Violent Crime Totals
			Murder/ Non-neg. Man- slaughter	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault		
Rate Per 100,000 inhabitants:								
1960	1,887.2	1,720.3	5.1	9.0	60.1	86.1	160.9	
1961	1,906.1	1,747.9	4.8	9.4	58.3	85.7	158.1	
1962	2,019.8	1,857.5	4.6	9.4	59.7	88.6	162.3	
1963	2,180.3	2,012.1	4.6	9.4	61.8	92.4	168.2	
1964	2,388.1	2,197.5	4.9	11.2	68.2	106.2	190.6	
1965	2,449.0	2,248.8	5.1	12.1	71.7	111.3	200.2	
1966	2,670.8	2,450.9	5.6	13.2	80.8	120.3	220.0	
1967	2,989.7	2,736.5	6.2	14.0	102.8	130.2	253.2	
1968	3,370.2	3,071.8	6.9	15.9	131.8	143.8	298.4	
1969	3,680.0	3,351.3	7.3	18.5	148.4	154.5	328.7	
1970	3,984.5	3,621.0	7.9	18.7	172.1	164.8	363.5	
1971	4,164.7	3,768.8	8.6	20.5	188.0	178.8	396.0	

Table 1.2 (continued)

Year	Total Crime Index	Property Crime Totals	Violent Crime by Type					Violent Crime Totals
			Murder/ Non-neg.		Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	
			Man- slaughter					
Rate Per 100,000 inhabitants:								
1972	3,961.4	3,560.4	9.0	22.5	180.7	188.8	401.0	
1973	4,154.4	3,737.0	9.4	24.5	183.1	200.5	417.4	
1974	4,850.4	4,389.3	9.8	26.2	209.3	215.8	461.1	
1975	5,281.7	4,800.2	9.6	26.3	218.2	227.4	481.5	
1976	5,266.4	4,806.8	8.8	26.4	195.8	228.7	459.6	
1977	5,055.1	4,588.4	8.8	29.1	187.1	241.5	466.6	
1978	5,140.3	4,642.5	9.0	31.0	195.8	262.1	497.8	
1979	5,565.5	5,016.6	9.7	34.7	218.4	286.0	548.9	
1980	5,950.0	5,353.3	10.2	36.8	251.1	298.5	596.6	
1981	5,858.2	5,263.9	9.8	36.0	258.7	289.7	594.3	
1982	5,603.6	5,032.5	9.1	34.0	238.9	289.2	571.1	
1983	5,175.0	4,637.4	8.3	33.7	216.5	279.2	537.7	
1984	5,031.3	4,492.1	7.9	35.7	205.4	290.2	539.2	

Table 1.2 (continued)

Year	Total Crime Index	Property Crime Totals	Violent Crime by Type					Violent Crime Totals
			Murder/ Non-neg. Man- slaughter	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault		
Rate Per 100,000 inhabitants:								
1985	5,207.1	4,650.5	7.9	37.1	208.5	302.9	556.6	
1986	5,480.4	4,862.6	8.6	37.9	225.1	346.1	617.7	
1987	5,550.0	4,840.3	9.7	77.4	212.7	751.7	688.7	
& Change:								
1960 to 1975	+ 179.9	+ 178.1	+88.2	+174.0	+263.1	+164.1	+199.3	
1976 to 1987	+ 5.4	+ 2.8	- 5.7	+ 42.7	+ 8.6	+ 53.6	+ 32.7	

Note 1: The source of information contained in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 was the 1960-1987 FBI Uniform Crime Reports with the exception of the Percentile Changes from 1976 to 1987 found in Table 1.2. This data was obtained by calculating the percentage difference between the 1976 and 1987 figures and rounding off the hundredths to the nearest tenth decimal point. This procedure was the same used by the FBI to determine the percentile changes from 1960 to 1975.

Note 2: In addition, Property Crime Totals in both Tables 1.1 and 1.2 are the combined total of all reported Burglaries, Larceny/Thefts and Motor Vehicle Thefts.⁵

Notes

¹ Martin A. Greenberg, "Security Awareness & Effective Training = Safer Schools," Security Management 30, no. 8 (August 1986): 48.

² Arnold P. Goldstein, Steven J. Apter and Berj Harootunian, School Violence (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), 3-5.

³ U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Violent Schools-Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to Congress: Executive Summary ERIC, 1978, ED 149 466, pg. 6.

⁴ Goldstein, 3-5.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Uniform Crime Reports 1976-1987 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988).

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW
Introduction

A review of the literature dealing with the topic of school crime reveals several important issues. The first one involves the difficulty in identifying the research topics which are most meaningful to scholars and practitioners at the present time. It is apparent that there have been several unexplained shifts in the direction of research by the experts with most efforts being dictated by events. At the same time, the problems associated with school crime have not changed significantly and the level of school crime has not been curtailed. The second issue revealed during the literature review involves the ideological groupings of those experts addressing the problem of school crime. The third issue revealed during the literature review addresses the problems associated with the inadequate and inaccurate reporting of incidents of school crime. These reporting inadequacies and inaccuracies have made it difficult to assess the extent of the problem and thus provide adequate and accurate solutions. What follows, then, will be the review of the aforementioned ideologies and a commentary on the problems associated with the reporting of incidents of school crime.

School-Induced Ideology

The first ideological group, the school-induced ideology, consists of those experts who feel that present levels of school crime are created by the characteristics of the schools themselves. As Gary Gottfredson notes, "of the possible places where steps might be taken to reduce the level of delinquency--the family, the criminal justice system or the school--the school is the most promising."¹ The contention of this ideology then is, that the school plays a significant role in the development of delinquent behavior and it is in the school that changes should be made in an attempt to reduce delinquent behavior and school crime. Polk and Schafer note that those who associate with the school-induced ideology view the schools as an institutional extension of middle-class values and norms which are reflected in regulations, policies and practices and imposed on the students within that institutional setting.² As long as there is conformity to the academic expectations (i.e., grades), and to the established behavioral expectations, (i.e., rules dealing with truancy, tardiness, vandalism, misbehavior, and crime), supporters contend that there are usually few problems. However, as soon as lower-class values, norms and expectations are exposed to the middle-class school systems' set of values and norms there often results a school-student conflict. Thus, students are

placed, by the school, on a scale of deviancy or academic performance based on their response to these established school norms. These norms then define deviancy, what is acceptable behavior, and the conditions under which success is possible for particular types of students. The school then either contributes to the alleviation or to the maintenance of deviancy as these norms respond to the behavior they have thus defined.

It is important to note that support for the school-induced ideology has a broad base of support. Tygart suggests that student social structures and subcultural variables should be viewed as a potential influence of school crime rather than being viewed merely as passive respondents to external forces which determine school crime.³

Armstrong makes an interesting argument for the causal effects of the school on delinquency and crime. He notes that:

There is substantial evidence to suggest that certain kinds of school experiences and practices are strongly correlated with the appearance and persistence of school crime and disruption. Such problems may, in many cases, be directly responsible for producing delinquent behavior among students. Facts strongly suggest that the educational system can act in a variety of different ways as a significant contribution to the likelihood of delinquent behavior.⁴

Experts have identified these "school experiences and practices" identified above which include: ability group-

ing, IQ testing, tracking, belief in limited potential opportunities as a result of low academic achievement, and sanctions imposed in response to misbehavior, to name but a few. The contention is that as a result of the student being subjected to one or more of these practices and experiences, reduction in self-image may develop and as a result the propensity towards delinquent behavior may result. Support for this contention can be found in a recently released study conducted by the Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents. The report recommended, "elimination of 'tracking' in which students are put into low and high-achieving groups that tend to discourage those in the slow tracks and doom them to years of uninspired instruction."⁵

There are also other school characteristics that have been associated with high levels of school crime and are identified with the term hard data. This hard data can include: a large school population, large student teacher ratios, racial/ethnic balances, the schools' physical characteristics, and schools with high proportions of males in the population.⁶

As a result of some students being exposed to these school experiences, practices and characteristics, there is a contention that these students often find themselves being identified or officially "labeled" as delinquent

or academically deficient. This theory further suggests that this labeling process may function as a precursor to a decline in self-image and encourage the tendency to become involved in delinquent, criminal behavior. One expert supporting this theory of labeling and its consequences is Delos H. Kelly. Kelly contends first, that those students affected by the process of labeling are influenced regardless of social class or background. Kelly concludes that labeling transcends a particular social class with students reacting characteristically to failure despite social class or any other variable. In addition, Kelly indicates that the research data uncovered through his efforts dispels many of the statements made by Cohen and others indicating the effect of social class as an explanatory variable. Kelly's basic contention rests with the notion that delinquency, disruption, and school crime occurs as a result of a student's initial misbehavior, academic failure, their tracking and ability grouping by the school, and the subsequent label placed on them.⁷

Community-Induced Ideology

The second ideological group, the community-induced ideology, consists of those experts who feel that the school is nothing more than a reflection and an extension of the community and that it is there, primarily in the community, that delinquency and societal ills

need to be addressed, not in the schools. The schools, they contend, are nothing more than the setting for crime. The community-induced ideology supports the notion that although school conditions may encourage school crime the primary problems of school crime can be found outside of the school within the community. The community-induced ideology and those community factors will now be addressed.

When looking at the factors that describe the problem of school crime that are external to the school environment, one finds that the base of the problem is broad. When looking at school-induced factors, the scope is somewhat more narrow and the solutions to many of the major problems are a matter of organizational change. For example, to eliminate or limit the negative effects of placing students in a particular academic track, the school might choose to abolish the practice of tracking and readdress academic standards while eliminating the official label "academically deficient." By doing this, self-image may not suffer and delinquent behavior may be avoided. Although somewhat an oversimplification of the problem, when one goes outside of the school environment and addresses the broad spectrum of community-induced factors that might cause delinquent behavior, one finds numerous conditions that may exist. These community-related factors have broad, deep-rooted origins and are not easily corrected. James Q. Wilson argues, "The 'root causes' of school crime are

the 'root causes' of crime in general." He goes on to note, "We are facing a problem, the causes of which we do not understand, are not likely to understand very well, and probably cannot eliminate in a generation or two. What we are seeing is a profound shift in values and institutional attachments that is producing all manner of rebellion."⁸

Those who are not as fatalistic as Wilson but still identify with the community-induced ideology contend that the school is merely a setting for crime and is less the cause of the crime itself. As Armstrong notes summing up the contentions of the community-induced ideology:

It is a well-recognized fact that students regularly bring into schools problems which have originated in their homes and neighborhoods. In this sense, schools have too often served as scapegoats for the problems of the larger community. Consequently, schools have become the receptacle for all kinds of misbehavior, rebellion and anti-social acts for which they are not ultimately responsible, but must respond to because of their position in the larger community. Clearly, conflict, violence and disruption in the schools is not totally the result of poor staffing, lack of resources or bad management techniques, but largely result from the failures of the larger society. Furthermore, it is unreasonable to expect schools, by themselves and without wider support, to provide ready solutions to these complex and pervasive problems being imposed upon them by circumstances beyond their control.⁹

As has been identified by Armstrong, it is within the confines of the community that many of the problems associated with school crime exist. It is also the social structure of the community that has attracted the attention

of sociologists and others in an attempt to explain the broader notion of delinquent behavior that is being practiced in the schools. These theoretical explanations have been the subject of many studies which have been conducted in an attempt to support or dispel certain theoretical explanations of delinquent behavior. In spite of these efforts, several theoretical groupings have emerged and it may be assumed that they are not without merit. Many of these causal theoretical explanations have stood the test of time and should be considered valuable when looking at school crime-related factors which operate external to the school setting. Rather than a piece-by-piece review of each of the theories that attempt to explain delinquent behavior, what will be used here is an instructive summary of the major theoretical groupings.

Differential Association Theory - Proponents of this theoretical explanation of delinquent behavior contend that when a person becomes delinquent they do so because of isolation from anticriminal behavior, and that the criminal behavior is learned within intimate personal groups.¹⁰ This theory suggests that with respect to school crime, strategies be developed that reduce contact with delinquent elements and reward the achievement of conventional norms.

Strain Theories - Proponents of this theoretical grouping contend that legitimate middle-class goal blockage occurs to those from the lower-class. As a result of this blockage, those from the lower-class are apt to resort to illegitimate means to achieve middle class goals.¹¹ The relationship between this theoretical group and school crime suggests that by giving all students access to legitimate opportunities there would be a reduction in the tendency to resort to illegitimate behavior.

Labelling Theory - Views delinquency as an escalating response to negative labels that describe a particular behavior.¹² To limit the effect of this theoretical group on school crime, strategies should be developed that limit the number of labels used and continue to encourage achievement.

Control Theory - This grouping holds that delinquency results from a lack of self control and external control. Control mechanisms include the family, the community, and the school. Without these support mechanisms, motivation to conform to traditionally accepted norms is absent, and may lead to delinquent behavior. Strategies to involve the community and the family, along with concerned support from within the schools, should be developed

to motivate students to conform to acceptable societal and school norms.¹³

It should be apparent that there is theoretical support for the community-induced ideology. These theoretical considerations go a long way in explaining their impact on delinquent behavior, and the impact of this behavior on the level of crime found within the schools. Additional support for these theoretical factors may be found in the review of the Violent Schools-Safe Schools Study¹⁴ which indicates that those community-induced factors that have an impact on crime within the schools include the following:

- Community Crime Rates
- The Presence of Gangs
- Unemployment Rates Within the Community
- Family Socio-economic Conditions
- The Number of Single Parents
- Low Levels of Family Discipline
- Poor Community Involvement, Organization and Stability

These community-induced factors, whether addressed individually or in combination, have proven to have a less than desired effect on the social organization, stability and functionability of the school's surrounding community. Support for these basic contentions come from a variety of sources.

James Q. Wilson notes, "School crime is merely an extension of crime in the rest of society. Much of what is called crime in the schools is really crime committed by young persons who happen to be enrolled in a school."¹⁵ This viewpoint strongly indicates the belief and support for the community-induced ideology.

Another source of support that indicates the primary significance of external community factors on the level of school crime comes from a 1986 Boston based study conducted by Hellman and Beaton. The study concludes that:

After review of the collected correlational data, school crime and disruption problems are a reflection of crime and disruption in the community, or stem from external environmental factors. The high values of the correlation coefficients suggest that the communities environmental contribution is substantial.¹⁶

Studies by McDermott, Wilson, and the team of Gottfredson and Daiger provide additional support regarding the significant effects of the community on levels of school crime and this comes from evidence that indicates that fear of crime in the schools is linked to fear of crime in the community. This evidence concludes that there are factors causing crime in communities and that communities possessing higher crime rates also have schools within their attendance area with higher crime rates.¹⁷

Another significant approach to explaining the problem of school crime stems from the contention that due to those

less than desirable community factors thus far mentioned, and the impact that these factors have had on both the community and the school, there has been what has been termed "white-flight" occurring in these communities. This phenomena has been described by Jackson Toby, Gary Gottfredson and Denise Fottfredson as the departure from the less than desirable urban communities, and their schools, by those who have the means, leaving those without the means and those less able behind to deal with the problems of both the community and the schools.¹⁸

The effects of this process are readily apparent. The community continues to suffer and retain those earlier mentioned factors that have been determined to cause delinquent behavior and the schools continue to be overpopulated with these problem youth and delinquent behavior is the result. To compound the problem, those school-induced characteristics described earlier in this chapter, (tracking, labeling, ability grouping), are then implemented to worsen a bad situation. The effects of this deterioration process have led schools facing these problems to be considered traps instead of springboards for able youths to improve their social status and aspirations for success. Toby concludes:

Controlling violence in urban schools is thus not only desirable for its own sake, but for the possibility of ameliorating two of the intractable problems of American education: 1) the draining away of the better students and the consequent increase of racial segre-

gation in the public schools of the largest central cities, and 2) educational ineffectiveness in those schools so serious as to prevent even intellectually able students from learning enough.¹⁹

Accommodationist Ideology

The third ideological group, the accommodationists, have adopted the position that supports both the school-induced and the community induced ideologies. They contend that factors internal and external to the school system warrant corrective efforts. Two such experts, Rubel and Ames, content:

The problem of violence and disruption in the schools has many interrelated causes. Within the school, teachers and administrators, the behavior code, the curriculum, and the physical facility can all make a difference in student behavior. Outside the school, parents, peers, and others in the neighborhood can reinforce or inhibit students' tendencies to misbehave. Because there is no single underlying cause of school-based crime and misbehavior, no simple universal solution exists.²⁰

With this said, the third issue revealed during the literature review will be addressed; those problems which are created as a result of inaccurate and inadequate reporting of school crime data.

Reporting/Data Collection Efforts

It is important to address this issue for a variety of reasons. First, as was stated earlier, this issue transcends the aforementioned ideologies regarding the primary sources of the problem of school crime, with all concerned noting it to be a significant roadblock in

determining the extent of the problem. Secondly, the problem appeared as a concern in nearly every book, journal article, and study reviewed. Third, and perhaps most important, it can be assumed that without accurate data the problem is less easily defined and viable solutions may lose their effectiveness.

The problem of obtaining accurate data is important so that feasible solutions may be formulated. The experts contend that this problem of inaccurate reporting of incidents of school crime does exist.

Rubel and Ames point out in their strategy on school crime problem-solving, that the critical groundwork in any effort to combat school crime includes the accurate reporting of incidents. They further contend that this accurate data has two functions. First, intricate details of an incident need to be reported so that the emphasis is placed on understanding the pattern of school crime so that corrective actions may be geared towards the overall reduction of the problem. Secondly, the data can assist the school system in selecting the specific problems which should be the topic of a formal action plan.²¹ The critical factor is that correctly identifying the problem can lead to appropriate action; therefore the first step in addressing any problem is identifying the extent of the problem. Although this deduction is readily apparent, scholars have repeatedly identified the reluctance or failure by school

administrators to report that which needs to be reported. Is this failure an attempt to intentionally hide the level of a school's problem or is it the lack of procedural guidelines that leads to this failure? Some state that it is willful failure, some suggest a procedural problem, while some indicate that it is a combination of the two. Armstrong suggests that:

Although schools have been plagued to varying degrees with crime and disorder throughout our nation's history, little systematic effort has been made to document the nature, frequency and distribution of misconduct on a national scale. In addition, there have been forces at work lending themselves either to a reluctance to collect and submit these data or to a tendency to distort such information once it is collected. In the past, underreporting or nonreporting of crime by teachers and administrators created a situation in which it has been impossible to discern definitively what the true state of affairs is with regard to crime, either in an individual school or collectively in schools across the country.²²

Armstrong concludes that positive results have emerged where the above problems have been corrected and teachers and school administrators are encouraged to report crimes.

This acknowledgment, that there exists a willful failure to report school crime, has a broad base of support which stems from the belief that those responsible for maintaining discipline within the schools, (e.g., teachers, principals, elected school-board officials), do not wish to be negatively scrutinized for failing to maintain good order within their schools. The rationale for this notion is as follows: if an elected official aspires to be re-

elected he or she must earn this re-election. A perceived failure by school board constituents to control the real or perceived level of school crime may negatively impact this outcome. As a result, pressure may ebb downward. In addition, a principal does not want his or her future to be determined by an ability to control or not control school crime, a problem many feel they, the principals, are not well suited and prepared to address. The same might be said with respect to the teachers in the schools. The result of this situation is too often the underreporting or inaccurate reporting of the extent of the problem.

On the other hand, some experts suggest that inaccuracies in reporting stem from the lack of procedural guidelines that define exactly what is to be reported, when to report, and specifically how it is to be recorded and not the willful failure as previously mentioned. For example, Rubel and Ames have identified, in-depth, the procedural elements that should be required when reporting incidents of school crime. They include the following: clearly defining the incidents that are to be reported; developing forms and files to record the incidents; and collecting and analyzing the information. These experts suggest that many of the problems and influences of inaccurate and inadequate reporting can be minimized by letting school administrators know that reporting is expected and by officially advising them as to procedural guidelines.²³

Many suggest, as is true with most methodological problems in the social sciences, that the problem of reporting incidents of school crime does not stem from a single causal factor; this problem is no exception. It is correct to assume that with respect to reporting inaccurate and inadequate levels of school crime, a combination of the two problems, the willful failure to report incidents and the lack of procedural guidelines, provide a more accurate analysis of this reporting problem.

The problems associated with the reporting of inaccurate or inadequate incidents of school crime cannot be effectively corrected until all affected parties involved agree: first, to not place the blame on any particular group of people or element; secondly, to put politically motivated actions aside; and third, until practical procedures are established at the local level based on input from a broader level.

A school system which has been able to achieve some degree of success with its reporting practices is the New Jersey State School System.²⁴ As a result of an increasing school crime problem and a lack of statistical data with which to base corrective actions, state legislation was enacted with support from the New Jersey Education Association that established a state mandated reporting system. This system established procedures that spelled out specifically what was to be reported, how it

was to be reported and when the information was to be submitted. By using a uniform checklist-type report form at the teacher level, incidents were reported which allowed bypassing much of the usual red tape since the report was submitted to the State Commissioner of Education's office within 10 days of an incident. At this point the data was analyzed and decisions were made as to how a specific problem might be corrected. The most important factor of this program deals with the awareness at the state level that there should be an expected dramatic increase in school crime and vandalism as a result of the new reporting procedures, and that once the problems have been identified then corrective action can be implemented to reduce these levels of crime at the local level. Several key elements in the success of this program should be addressed. First, by acknowledging the reporting problem at the state level, blame at the local level was reduced. Secondly, by providing a solution to the reporting problem at the state level, the message was sent to constituents that a solution was provided to the local school district and thus potential political damage was minimized. Finally, and more importantly, is the fact that an effort was made to reduce the level of inaccurate and inadequate information being used to identify problems and find solutions to the local school crime problems.

Summary

Chapter Two has briefly addressed those major issues identified as a result of a review of the literature dealing with the problem of school crime. First, it was mentioned that there exists a difficulty in identifying the research topics that practitioners and scholars would like addressed. Secondly, the literature review identified existing ideologies and how they attempt to identify those factors related to the problem of school crime. Finally, the issue of inaccurate and inadequate reporting of incidents of school crime was addressed concluding that the causes stem from the willful attempt to mis-report, procedural reporting inadequacies, or a combination of both. The experts conclude that it is essential for all players to put aside personal aspirations and correctly identify the extent of the problem. By doing so procedural practices can be developed and implemented allowing for a more accurate base of data with which to formulate correct responses to the problem.

Notes

¹ Gary D. Gottfredson, "American Education: American Delinquency," Today's Delinquent 6 (1987): 6.

² Kenneth Polk and William F. Schafer, Schools and Delinquency (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972), 162.

³ C. E. Tygart, "Student Social Structures and/or Subcultures as Factors in School Crime: Towards A Paradigm," Adolescence 15, no. 57 (Spring 1980): 13-16.

⁴ Troy L. Armstrong, "Trends and Patterns in School Crime and Disruption: The Nature, Scale, and Distribution of These Problems," Unpublished paper, 1985: 26.

⁵ Diane Curtis, "New Report Blasts U.S. Middle Schools," San Francisco Chronicle (San Francisco California, June 19, 1989): A2.

⁶ U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Violent Schools - Safe Schools: The Safe Schools Study Report to the Congress: Executive Summary ERIC, 1978. ED 149 466.

⁷ Delos H. Kelly and William T. Pink, School Crime and Individual Responsibility: Perpetuation of a Myth?" The Urban Review 14, no. 1 (1982): 47.

⁸ James Q. Wilson, "Crime in Society and Schools," Educational Researcher 5 (May 1976): 4.

⁹ Armstrong, 30-31.

10 See:

Edwin H. Sutherland, Principles of Criminology, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1955): 80-83.

Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza, "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency," The American Journal of Sociology 22 (1957): 664-670.

11 See:

Albert K. Cohen, Delinquent Boys: The Culture of Gang, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958): 23-26, 121-137, 183-186, and 192-193; Richard Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, Delinquency and Opportunity, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960): 145-159; and, Robert K. Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," American Sociological Review 3 (October 1938): 672-282.

12 Kelly, 47.

13 See:

Travis Hirschi, Causes of Delinquency, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969): 1-25.

Walter C. Reckless, "A New Theory of Delinquency and Crime," Federal Probation 25 (December 1961): 42-46.

14 U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 8.

15 James Q. Wilson, Violence in Schools, eds. J. M. McPartland and E. L. McDill (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1977), 43-49.

¹⁶ Daryl A. Hellman and Susan Beaton, "The Pattern of Violence in Urban Public Schools: The Influence of School and Community," Journal of Research In Crime and Delinquency 23, no. 2 (May 1986): 109.

¹⁷ See:

M. J. McDermott, "Crime in the School and in the Community: Offenders, Victims, and Fearful Youths," Crime and Delinquency 29 (1983): 270-282.

James Q. Wilson, Violence in Schools: Perspectives, Programs and Positions, eds. J. M. McPartland and E. L. McDill (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath, 1977): 48.

Gary D. Gottfredson and D. C. Daiger, "Disruption in Six Hundred Schools: The Social Ecology of Personal Victimization in the Nation's Public Schools," (Baltimore: The Center for Social Organization of Schools, 1979).

¹⁸ See:

Jackson Toby, "Crime in American Public Schools," The Public Interest 58 (Winter 1980): 34.

Gary D. Gottfredson and Denise C. Gottfredson, Victimization In Schools (New York: Plenum Press, 1985): v-vii.

¹⁹ Toby, 34.

²⁰ Robert J. Rubel and Nancy L. Ames, Reducing School Crime and Student Misbehavior: A Problem-

Solving Strategy, U.S. Department of Justice and U. S. Department of Education (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1986): 25.

21 Rubel, 29-31.

22 Armstrong, 3.

23 Rubel, 70-83.

24 Marshall O. Donley, Ben Kittner and Jane Power, "How Education Associations Fight Violence: New Jersey," Today's Education 69 (April-May 1980): 24g.

CHAPTER 3
RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY

Recommendations

Before addressing the conclusions reached as a result of this study and before a summary is offered, it is necessary to identify several recommendations as to where this research student feels that future efforts need to be directed in order to more effectively combat the problems associated with school crime.

The first recommendation centers around the concept of formulating a more unified opinion as to the causal factors of school crime. As was stated in Chapter Two, ideologies remain controversial and to get supporters of the various ideologies to find total agreement on the major problems that cause school crime might prove to be difficult. It is not recommended that supporters of these different ideologies abandon their beliefs. What is recommended is that they adopt a center position similar to that offered by the accommodationists and include each others contrasting ideologies when identifying those problems that need to be addressed. The social environment in which a school exists should not be considered and assistance should be directed at the community when attempting to combat school crime. To

change the organizational characteristics of a school without considering the community characteristics in which the school exists is not recommended. With this concept in mind, those experts presenting scholarly opinions that support a more central accommodationist ideology might encourage those developing programs to consider both school-induced factors and community-induced factors with the end result being ore successful programs.

In support of this concept, Jacqueline Jordan Irvine suggests that just because a shcool is located in a low-income community that possesses characteristics that include high levels of single parent families, high levels of families on social welfare programs, and generally displaying characteristics typical of high crime neighborhoods, that there is no reason why the schools in these communities should be destined to fail. She contends that these community factors external to the school must be accepted and considered as givens that are usually out of the school's purview to directly influence or change. She further contends that when changing factors internal to the school these "given" external community characteristics become important considerations. Irvine notes that of those schools that involve the community, specifically the parents, in the development of school policy, instruction, and curriculum development, most have met with success in reducing a multitude of problems

that might otherwise lead to a disruptive school environment.¹

In addition to the involvement of parents in changing internal school factors, there is one program, The Cities In Schools Program, developed in 1974 by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), that involves the public and private sectors of the community, as well, in providing assistance to both students and the families of students that require special attention. This on going program has proven to be successful in 25 major city school systems and targets those schools in low-income neighborhoods that have exceptionally high levels of school dropouts. The OJJDP concluded that dropping out of school is part of a cycle that frequently includes crime, illiteracy, unemployment, teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse. The OJJDP further concluded that these problems were further compounded by community characteristics that included poor economic conditions, inadequate housing, and a variety of family related problems. The philosophy of the program is to identify those students who display a poor level of academic achievement, poor school attendance records, disruptive behavior or severe family problems and refer the student and/or the family to the Cities In Schools Program. Once referred, the student and the family receive support and monitoring from existing public and

private sources located inside of the schools. The nature of this assistance might include providing academic counseling and encouragement, providing job opportunities, and alcohol and drug rehabilitation if necessary. The family is also provided with assistance through this program by helping find affordable housing, financial and legal assistance, and help in securing employment. By helping the family improve their situation, the student might better be able to stay in school thus avoiding the cycle that tends to lead to delinquent disruptive behavior both in the school and in the community.²

Another example of a program that considered both school-induced factors and community-induced factors can be found in the experimental program conducted in the Millwood School System in Kalamazoo, Michigan. This program's efforts were targeted at a school system whose community crime rate was high, and whose delinquency, dropout, suspension, expulsion and truancy rates were also high. The community characteristics also included many of the factors identified in Chapter Two as having a significant impact on the level of delinquent behavior, (e.g., high unemployment rate, high numbers of single parent families, etc.). The intention of this experimental program was centered around a concept of organizational change intended to increase pro-social behavior by altering the schools' structure--the curriculum,

discipline practices, opportunities for student participation and coordination across various student roles to promote social integration. By involving elements of the community, along with the schools' staff in developing curriculum, elements of organization, and less formal mechanisms to deal with troubled students, the school was able to achieve reductions in the truancy level, dropout rates, expulsion rates and suspension rates and ultimately the level of delinquency in the schools.³

Each of these examples display significant success rates as a result of program formulation and direction that was based on the consideration of both school-induced factors and community-induced factors. It is this research student's recommendation that programs be developed based on this accommodationist ideology. It is by directing efforts at the school's organizational characteristics and at the same time considering what impact community factors may have on these efforts that a greater level of success might be realized.

At this point, it is important to note that just because a program is successful in one particular school or location that the replication of the same program elsewhere will result in equal success. Local circumstances will often dictate whether one type of program or another would work best. The evaluation of the types of programs described above needs to be ongoing. By con-

ducting program evaluation, common characteristics of successful programs might be better identified and applied where specific conditions warrant. Also, by evaluating these programs, unsuccessful efforts or the misapplication of a program might be avoided, saving valuable effort and resources. This need for program evaluation was expressed by Gary D. Gottfredson who noted, "Carefully-studied school improvement programs with measurable effects on adolescent problem behavior are in short supply."⁴

The second recommendation centers around the problems associated with the reporting of incidents of school crime. The problems associated with the inaccurate and inadequate reporting and collection of school crime data was identified in Chapter Two as being a major problem, hindering efforts to curb the level of school crime. It has also been established that accurate data is the basis for sound program development. What will be offered now is a recommended data collection model, (The National School Crime Information Center), designed to facilitate the collection of school crime data and dissemination of information regarding program alternatives. It is this research student's recommendation that in order to establish credibility for this data collection model, that it be nationally directed, preferably under the administrative direction of the Department of Education

(DOE). Based on current and past corrective programs being directed primarily at those school-induced factors previously identified, the DOE would best be suited to administratively direct the Center's responsibilities. In addition, by placing the administrative responsibility within the DOE, it is this student's opinion that school administrators and teachers would be more responsive to the efforts and recommendations made by the Center, especially in light of past efforts made to extensively involve the Department of Justice in the school crime issue by the Reagan Administration in 1984.⁵ It is recommended, however, that the Department of Justice (DOJ) play a role in the administration of the Center in an effort to foster cooperation and information exchange despite any past differences. The basic concept of this model centers around the inbound and outbound exchange of accurate data relating to incidents of school crime and program evaluation. The flow chart, (Chart 3.1, page 43), identifies the process that this information exchange would take with the key elements of the National School Crime Information Center identified as follows:

1. The Data Collection/Dissemination Division - whose function would be to receive data from the State Boards of Education with respect to the number of incidents of school crime, categorize, organize, collate and provide this data primarily to the Research

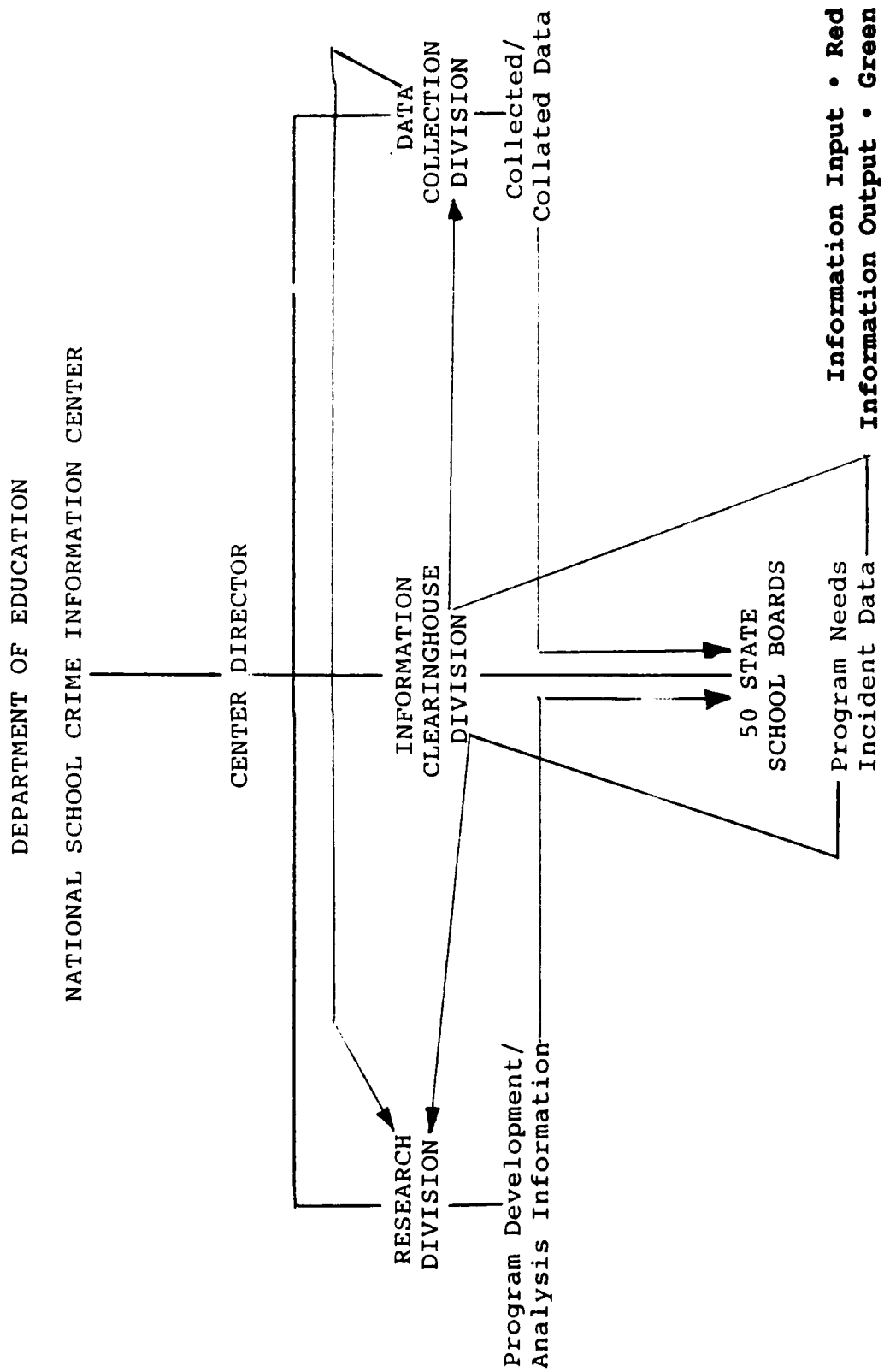


Table 3.1, Information Flow for the Proposed NSCIC

Division. This data would also be made available to a multitude of law enforcement agencies, researchers, and scholars.

2. **The Research Division** - which would be responsible for analyzing the information received from the Data Collection/Dissemination Division regarding the reported incidents of school crime, providing analytical support to ongoing programs, and developing and recommending program alternatives to the school systems based on specific conditions.

3. **The Information Clearinghouse Division** - would be at the hub of the information exchange process acting as the focal point of contact with the states. This division would also be responsible for collecting, and distributing all inbound and outbound information from and to the states. Once data and requests come in to this division it would be reviewed and directed to either the Research Division or the Information Clearinghouse Division. Outbound information with regard to trends, recommended programs, research results, etc., would also flow through this division.

The intent of the National School Crime Information Center would be to provide a centrally located national clearinghouse for information and data regarding school crime. Not directive in nature, the primary purpose of the center would be to provide the states with a source of accurate data and

program alternatives based on their needs. A secondary purpose of this Center would be to provide educators, scholars, researchers, and law enforcement agencies with an accurate base of data reflecting current trends by type, number, location, rate, etc., in our nation's public school system. These entities could utilize this data, as they have used past data to reflect the level and trends in school crime with one important difference. In the past, the origin, nature, and accuracy of the data was questionable, thus the conclusions these experts reached were often questioned and often resulted in conflict between those examining the issue of school crime. During the 1984 Senate Subcommittee Hearings before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice, several experts failed to agree on the extent of the school crime problem citing the reason for this disagreement as statistical inadequacies that exist at the national level. As a result, conclusions were reached and recommendations presented based on questionable statistical data.

Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers testified before this Senate committee that these statistical inadequacies were caused by the willful failure by the schools to report incidents of school crime and that any effort to address school crime needs to be based on accurate data.⁶ Others testifying before the committee hearings included Alfred S. Regnery, past Admin-

istrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U. S. Department of Justice, and Gary L. Bauer, the Deputy Under Secretary for Planning, Budget, and Evaluation, U. S. Department of Education. These high level administrators had already assumed that the current school crime data was accurate, portraying the school crime problem as extensive and had developed national program directives based on this data, directives that many educators felt were inappropriate, unsound and biased.⁷

Another factor to consider when attempting to understand the implications of Shanker, Regnery and Bauer's testimony is that much of what they testified to before the committee was based on a multitude of studies, polls and expert writings. The deduction made by this research student is that if incident reporting data is indeed inaccurate and national direction is developed based on this data, then how can one suggest that the proposed program direction will be accurate and achieve the desired results? To take this issue one step further, if senior ranking officials, such as Shanker, Regnery and Bauer are basing their statements on the written efforts of those authors who prepare studies, polls and writings, then the data that is reflected in these sources needs to be accurate. Thus, educators, scholars, research scientists, law enforcement officials and other agency officials whose use of school crime incident data results in their written work being used to

formulate program direction need to have access to the most accurate data available. This data would be available through the National School Crime Information Center.

It is important to note that in order for this data collection model to be effective, the states need to follow established, uniform reporting procedures and that these procedures allow for local schools to report incidents of school crime from the classroom or the school security office directly to the State School Board free from retribution. It is only then that the process would be reasonably assured of resulting in some level of accuracy and success.

These recommendations are in no way offered in an attempt to eliminate the problems associated with correcting the problem of school crime. What this research student hopes to have done is to identify the need to address the problems of school crime from an approach that considers both school-induced factors and community-induced factors. In program development, it has been demonstrated that these programs meet with more success. In addition, in order for the extent of the problem to be accurately identified, accurate data needs to be solicited and extracted from the schools. It is only then that the extent of the problem can be truly understood and programs designed to correct those problems with a reasonable hope of success. It is through a national effort, such as the one proposed in

this chapter, that the accurate collection of data might best be achieved.

Conclusions

There are many factors that exist in both the community and the school that can be linked to the problem of school crime. In the community, high crime rates, high levels of unemployment, high numbers of single parent families, divorce, the presence of street gangs, drugs, alcohol and poor community involvement, organization and stability. These destabilizing factors have a negative effect on what happens in the schools located within communities that experience these problems, these factors influence student behavior both on and off school campuses. In the schools themselves there are also many organizational characteristics that, when coupled with external community problems, can make a potentially bad situation worse. Often schools located within communities that experience these negative community factors will place students into limiting academic tracks or into lower-ability groups that send the student a message through the labeling process that their upward mobility is limited. As a result of this limit in upward mobility, motivation is often curtailed and accepting ones perceived limited potential can result in these students displaying behavioral problems that may include: truancy, suspension from school, dropping out of school, resultant unemployment and the propensity towards crime

and deviant behavior. During this cycle or process, however, the school is often left to deal with the students who display these behavioral problems and it is these students who often are the source of the school crime problem.

Those scholars and experts who have addressed the issue of school crime have adopted, to some degree or another, one of three ideological positions. There are those who propose that the schools' characteristics are the primary source of the problem and once corrected, would lead to the reduction of school crime. On the other hand, there are those experts who propose that the larger ills of society and negative community factors are the source of the problem and that the schools within these communities merely serve as the setting for crime. The third group of experts, the accommodationists, propose that both school characteristics and external community factors are issues that need to be equally considered when addressing solutions to the problem. Specifically what school-induced factors need to or can be changed and what community-induced factors need to or can be changed depends considerably on circumstances. From an ideological standpoint, the conclusion reached is that there is a need to accommodate both school and community factors if the necessary program alternatives are to meet with any level of success.

With respect to program alternatives, there are currently numerous efforts that are being made in attempting to address the school crime issue. Earlier in this chapter it was recommended that program efforts need to be directed at changes that involve helping the students and at helping the community help the students. The conclusion reached with respect to program alternatives is that it is these types of programs that offer the greatest hope of success.

One area that has remained a concern of most school crime experts are the problems associated with the inaccurate and inadequate reporting of incidents of school violence. These experts have written and continue to express ideological and methodological support for what they feel are the factors that best explain school crime. These writings and their conclusions are often based on the inaccurate data that many of these same experts have identified in their criticisms. Based on many of these writings, program solutions are developed at all levels to address a particular problem. Those solutions implemented often fall short of their intended goals because problem-solving program development depends on knowing the true extent of the problem. Thus, inaccurately reporting the extent of the school crime problem has the potential to create a network of problems and create conflict over recommended direction to address the problem.

The conclusion reached with respect to school crime incident reporting is that a national effort needs to be undertaken in an effort to accurately collect data regarding incidents, levels and trends of school crime. This data could then be used as a central source of information by experts to substantiate their research contentions. As a result, those making policy and developing program alternatives might produce more reliable options. To achieve this goal, a model National School Crime Information Center was presented whose purpose would be to act as the focal point for standardized school crime incident report collection, collation, and evaluation. In addition, research and program evaluation could also be sponsored at this level, based on this data, and information could be made available to the schools and to the wide variety of other school crime research experts and agencies. Perhaps a central source of credible data would limit the controversy caused by incident data inaccuracies and more agreements be reached as to what course of action is best.

Summary

Research into the subject of school crime has revealed an ideological controversy as to the nature, extent and source of the school crime problem. In addition, this ideological controversy has spawned questions as to the direction corrective efforts need to take. Adding to the ideological controversy are the problems that exist that

are associated with the reporting of incidents of school crime.

The questions dealing with the source of the problem, the direction that programs should take and what should be done about inaccurate incident reporting leave the research student with the opinion that the approach being taken to address these issues is fragmented. It appears that a more unified direction is lacking. This is not to suggest that efforts are not being made nor that success is nonexistent. What is being suggested is that much more could be accomplished if a more unified direction could be established with respect to problem identification, program alternatives, and school crime incident data collection.

The answer to the question of problem identification is illusive. Trying to secure consensus as to a standard set of problem factors that cause school crime is not likely to happen. Experts will continue to disagree on different ideologies leaving this student hoping that through a continued exchange of ideas a more centered ideology would emerge that addresses both school-induced factors and community-induced factors.

It also appears that successful program alternatives aim their efforts at factors both internal and external to the school. It may be through these successful efforts that, perhaps, ideologies might be awayed to move to a more accommodating position, accepting each others conflicting

ideology as contributing factors. By doing so, strength through support for these programs would be added resulting in less conflict and a more expeditious reaction to the school crime problem.

The need for accurate school crime incident data is necessary with this need being well established. Accurate data is at the base of explaining the extent of the problem, and it is also the source of much debate and conflict over national direction. It is this student's opinion that without accurate data with which to identify the level and nature of school crime, efforts will continue to be fragmented and personally or politically motivated.

Notes

¹ Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, "Urban Schools That Work: A Summary of Relevant Factors," The Journal of Negro Education 57, no. 3 (1988): 236-237.

² U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, OJJDP Update on Programs (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988): 2-3.

³ Denise C. Gottfredson, "Examining the Potential of Delinquency Prevention Through Alternative Education," Today's Delinquent 6 (1987): 87-88 and 91-92.

⁴ Gary D. Gottfredson, "American Education: American Delinquency," Today's Delinquent 6 (1987): 59.

⁵ U. S. Senate Hearing before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice of the Committee on the Judiciary, Crime and Violence in the Schools (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984): 73.

⁶ U. S. Senate Hearing before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice of the Committee on the Judiciary, 6.

⁷ U. S. Senate Hearing before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice of the Committee on the Judiciary, 24-67 and 72.

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